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Prepared by
**Food Safety
and Quality
Service**

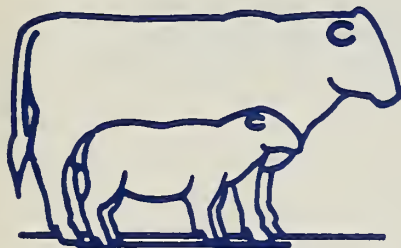
Food News for Consumers

May 1980

USDA's Food Safety and Quality Service:

- Inspects domestic and imported meat, poultry, and meat and poultry products;
- Establishes ingredient standards and approves recipes and labels for processed meat and poultry products;
- Inspects liquid, dried, and frozen egg products;
- Establishes grade standards for fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products, and provides grading services for these foods on request;
- Monitors the food industry for violations of inspection and grading laws; and
- Buys food for the USDA school lunch program and other food assistance programs.

FSQS Acts to Keep Meat Free from DES



FSQS is taking swift action to assure that the nation's meat supply does not contain residues of diethylstilbestrol (DES), a drug banned for animal use by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

DES had been used to improve the weight gain efficiency of cattle and sheep for many years. However, based on research that DES causes cancer, FDA banned the use of the drug after November 1, 1979.

In mid-March, FDA learned that DES was being used illegally after the ban. FDA then notified FSQS, which is responsible for assuring the safety of the meat supply.

"We're 'locking the barn door' of feedlots that used DES illegally," said Carol Tucker Foreman, assistant secretary of agriculture. Before the cattle will be accepted for slaughter, the illegal implants of the drug must be surgically removed. Following removal, specified holding periods must be observed to assure that the animals rid themselves of the DES. The protective actions must be supported by sworn affidavits from both a USDA-accredited veterinarian and a feedlot official.

"This is a blatant disregard for the law that cannot be tolerated," Foreman said. "FSQS will work with FDA to assure that legal action will be taken against those who have violated the law."

Reading Food Labels Can Keep You Healthy

"Caution: Your diet may be hazardous to your health."

Although you'll never see this warning on a product label, many scientists today believe certain health problems--heart and blood vessel diseases, obesity, and tooth decay--can be traced to diet. There is also some evidence linking diet to other diseases, including certain forms of cancer.

"Diet is not the only factor contributing to human health, but it's a major one," according to Elizabeth Murphy, FSQS nutritionist. "Better nutrition at any age can be a positive step toward disease prevention."

Reading Labels continued

Given the enormous variety of foods available in American supermarkets, what foods should you eat to stay healthy?

Although there is no "ideal" diet for everyone, USDA and the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) recently announced seven guidelines to help healthy people stay healthy. The dietary guidelines are:

1. Eat a variety of foods.
2. Maintain ideal weight.
3. Avoid too much fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.
4. Eat foods with adequate starch and fiber.
5. Avoid too much sugar.
6. Avoid too much sodium (including table salt, baking soda, baking powder, monosodium glutamate, and other "hidden" sodium sources).
7. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.

But how can you find foods to follow these guidelines when you shop? How do you know how much sugar, sodium, or fat a particular food contains?



Some of these questions are answered on the product label. Many labels supply such information as the number of calories per serving and the grams of protein, fat, and carbohydrates per serving. (A gram is 0.035 ounce.) Sometimes sodium content, the amount of polyunsaturated and saturated fat, and the amount of cholesterol are also included, as well as certain vitamins and minerals.

A label's list of ingredients provides other valuable information. Through careful reading, you can get a good idea of how much sugar, salt, or other ingredients are in a product. By law, ingredients must be listed in decreasing order. The first ingredient listed is the most abundant; the last ingredient is the least abundant.

A plan announced last December by the federal government would provide even more important and useful information on product labels. Watch for new proposals late this summer.

For more information: "Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans" (Feb. 1980); "Food Labeling at a Glance;" summary of the Dec. 21, 1979, Federal Register document on the food labeling plan; and USDA Press Release #2898-79 (12-19-79).

USDA to Strengthen Residue Detection System

To provide consumers with greater assurance of a food supply free from contamination, USDA has proposed changes to strengthen its National Residue Program. "By improving the residue program in key areas, we will be better prepared to grapple with the potential food contamination problems of the 1980's," according to Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Carol Tucker Foreman.

How to Obtain Free Copies

Single free copies of press releases, Federal Register reprints, studies, fact sheets, and publications mentioned in the FSQS section of this newsletter are available from regional information offices across the country (see page 12) or from FSQS Information, Room 3606-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. Phone: (202) 447-5223.

Tips on Writing Comments

For tips on how to give your comments more weight, write for the FSQS fact sheet called "Public Participation: Getting Involved in FSQS" (March 1980).

Residue System continued



The first formal proposal intended to improve the residue program was announced Feb. 29. USDA proposed that federally-inspected meat, poultry, and egg products plants be prohibited from installing new or replacement equipment that contains polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB). This proposal was published in the Feb. 29 Federal Register, and the public comment period was open until April 30.

Other actions under consideration by USDA include:

- a request for legislative authority to require owner identification of all animals sent to slaughter and authority to quarantine animals on the farm;
- a new system to establish coordinated communication early in a contamination emergency;
- regulations to require food processors to remove equipment containing PCB from their facilities; and
- expanded training and education of USDA personnel to emphasize public health consequences of a contaminated food supply.

This plan to improve the residue program stems from last summer's incident of PCB contamination of meat, poultry, and egg products in Montana. The plan was first announced in USDA's report on PCB contamination to Congress in January.

PCB is a class of toxic industrial chemicals which have been widely used since 1929 in transformers, heat transfer equipment, and capacitors for their stability and fire and heat resistance. The manufacture and distribution of PCB was banned in July 1979 by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, EPA allows limited continued use of PCB in totally-enclosed systems such as capacitors and transformers, and this equipment is present in many food processing plants.

USDA's Food Safety and Quality Service has responsibility, under federal meat, poultry, and egg products inspection acts to assure that these food products do not contain any adulterants. Because PCB is toxic, its presence in food processing plants represents a substantial hazard to human health and the environment.

While the present FSQS residue sampling system was not designed to detect each incident of residues in food animals, the changes proposed by the agency are designed to increase the program's effectiveness.

For more information: Press Releases #183-80 (1-21-80) and 461-80 (2-29-80) and "Report on the PCB Incident in the Western United States" (Jan. 1980).

Grapefruit Juice Standards May Be Changed

Consumers will find "U.S. Grade A" grapefruit juice in a greater range of color if proposed changes in the voluntary grade standards for the product are put into effect.

To qualify for "U.S. Grade A" under the new proposal, juice would still come from well-ripened fruit and have good flavor. However, more variation in the color of the juice would be acceptable. Abnormally-colored juice could not qualify as "U.S. Grade A." Alternative grade names "Fancy" and "Choice" would be dropped under the proposed changes, while retaining the single-letter grades "U.S. A" and "B."

Comments on the proposal are due by July 1. For more information: Press Release #388-80 (2-15-80).

USDA Donates Chicken



Hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutions received over 11 million pounds of whole frozen chicken from USDA during the past month.

The chicken was purchased by USDA to remove surplus supplies of chicken from the market. The surplus resulted from President Carter's Jan. 4 suspension of trade with the Soviet Union.

The chicken donated under this program is in addition to the regular purchases of frozen breaded and cut-up chicken purchased by USDA throughout the year for school lunch programs. For more information: Press Releases #179-80 (1-19-80), #220-80 (1-24-80), and #309-80 (2-6-80).

Financial Assistance for Consumers

Consumers can now receive financial assistance from USDA to help them participate more effectively in the development of USDA regulations.

To be eligible to receive funds, consumers must meet two requirements: they must lack the resources to participate; and they must represent a view that might not otherwise be heard.

The program, which began Feb. 25, allows consumers to be repaid for costs in preparing written comments as well as for hearing appearances. Expenses can be claimed for costs of attorneys, experts, clerical services, studies, displays, travel, and subsistence.

Here's how the program works within FSQS:

- When officials decide that repaying participants is necessary for a full discussion of the issue, a notice is published in the Federal Register. The notice describes what action the agency proposes to take and invites people to apply for funds.
- After all applications are received, each one is analyzed to make sure it meets the two criteria for reimbursement.
- An impartial department evaluation board determines who receives funds. Each applicant will receive a copy of the board's decision, and, if an application is denied, the agency will explain why.
- If the application is approved, the consumer has 90 days after participation to send in the claim for funds. The agency must pay within 30 days after the claim is filed.

For more information, write to the Public Participation Staff, Room 1168-S, FSQS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250, or call (202) 447-7804. Press Release #166-80 (1-18-80).

USDA Consumer Office

In Executive Order 12160, President Carter asked all cabinet-level departments to "enhance and coordinate" their consumer programs. In response, Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland recently established an Office of Consumer Affairs in USDA.

The Office of Consumer Affairs, headed by Neill Schaller, will coordinate all USDA agencies' consumer affairs programs and establish specific guidelines to assure that: (1) all consumers are well-informed about USDA actions and

Consumer Office
continued

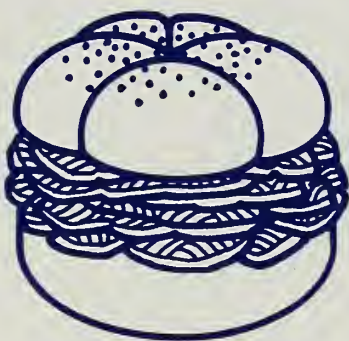


programs; (2) that consumers are provided with adequate opportunities to participate in department decisions; and (3) that consumers' complaints are handled effectively.

This special effort is needed to assure that consumers--the most diverse population group affected by government decisions--are involved in USDA decision-making.

For more information, write Public Participation, Rm. 1168-S, FSQS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250, or call (202) 447-7804.

Roast Beef: Pink, Juicy, and Safe



Rare roast beef cooked in federally inspected plants is safer now, according to a USDA survey released April 11. The survey was made to assess the results of new cooking rules developed cooperatively by USDA and the meat industry.

Beef, cooked in meat processing plants according to USDA rules, is sold to supermarkets, delicatessens, and the like. Retailers who cook on their premises are under the jurisdiction of state and local health departments, not USDA.

USDA issued cooking rules in 1977 after a summertime outbreak of salmonella food poisoning was traced to undercooked roast beef. At first, emergency rules required that plants cook roast beef to an internal temperature of 145 F (63 C) to assure safety. However, that temperature also changes the color and flavor of the meat, making it "medium" rather than "rare."

Because rare roast beef is so popular, USDA and industry cooperated on studies that established time and temperature combinations that produce rare but safe beef. The resultant time-temperature chart was incorporated into USDA regulations in 1978.

During 1979 USDA microbiologists tested samples of roast beef collected by inspectors from 28 plants. All 911 samples from 840 beef rounds were free of salmonellae, common food-poisoning bacteria.

Since the emergency and revised rules went into effect, the only cases of food poisoning traceable to roast beef came from a plant not meeting USDA requirements. Press Release #776-80 (4-11-80).

U.S. Stops Importing Meat from El Salvador

USDA has removed El Salvador's two meat slaughtering plants from the list of approved exporters that can ship meat products to the U.S. The action was taken after the level of pesticides, specifically chlorinated hydrocarbons, detected in exported meat from El Salvador indicated that the country had inadequate control over its chemical residue program.

Products currently waiting entry into the U.S. will undergo intensive laboratory analysis to ensure that no adulterated meat reaches American consumers. El Salvador will not be permitted to ship meat products to the U.S. again until the country demonstrates that it has a reliable residue control program. Press Release #630-80 (3-24-80).

Enforcing the Laws

meat inspection withdrawn



The following are some recent actions initiated by FSQS to protect the nation's food supply.

Federal inspection was withdrawn on Feb. 11 from B. Constantino and Sons, Inc., a Springfield, Ill., meat-packer. The firm was designated a "chronic problem" plant last June because of continuing insanitary operating conditions that could result in adulterated meat. The firm failed to make the necessary repairs, despite numerous opportunities to do so. USDA will restore meat inspection only if major structural deficiencies are corrected. The firm cannot process meat products without federal inspection. Press Release #387-80 (2-15-80).

Federal meat inspection will be withdrawn indefinitely from Utica Packing Company, Utica, Mich., unless the firm's president, David Fenster, gives up all association with the firm within 90 days and sells his company stock within a year. The Feb. 11 order was based on Fenster's earlier felony conviction for bribing a federal inspector on four occasions. Press Release #460-80 (2-29-80).

misrepresented beef

On Feb. 26, Sumter Frozen Foods, Inc., Sumter, S.C., and two of its officers were sentenced for violations of the Federal Meat Inspection Act. The corporation was fined \$1,000 after pleading guilty to transporting approximately 920 pounds of uninspected beef in commerce. C. B. West, the firm's president, was fined \$10,000, placed on 5 years' probation, and ordered to dispose of his company stock within 2 years and separate himself from the corporation by June 1. Clifford R. Geddings, the firm's general manager, was fined \$1,000 and placed on 2 years' probation. Press Release #569-80 (3-13-80).

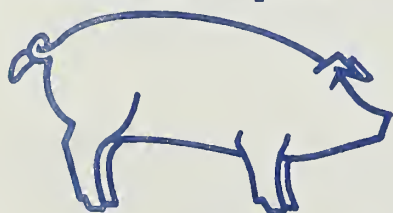
uninspected and mislabeled meat

On Feb. 20, Allen Weinstein, vice president of Weinstein International Corp., Golden Valley, Minn., was fined \$20,000 for fraudulently selling and attempting to distribute approximately 17,800 pounds of adulterated beef. The beef came from Australia and had been refused entry into the U.S. because it contained "pathological lesions." Weinstein shipped the adulterated meat to a buyer in Curacao, Netherlands Antilles, using an altered USDA document. Press Release #528-80 (3-7-80).

adulterated beef

On Jan. 28, Swift and Co., Marshalltown, Iowa, was fined \$1,000 after pleading guilty to causing the contamination last April of approximately 1,000 pounds of fresh pork by waste water from slaughtering operations. Because some of the contaminated pork had been mixed into the products of other manufacturers, last year's nationwide recall covered more than 4 million pounds of various meat products. Press Release #239-80 (1-28-80).

contaminated pork



unwholesome eggs

Frederick Maples, Jr., owner, Maples Poultry Farm, Elmendorf, Texas, was sentenced Jan. 18 after pleading guilty to selling 18 cases of cracked, dirty, and inedible eggs to a San Antonio supermarket in Nov. 1978. Maples received a \$1,000 fine, two years of supervised probation, and a one-year suspended prison sentence for violation of the Egg Products Inspection Act. FSQS Release (2-19-80).

On Feb. 15, Frank Hostetter, owner, High Quality Pack, Sanford, Co., was fined \$750 and placed on 2 years' probation. Hostetter pleaded "no contest" to charges of falsely representing that beef products he sold to a Texas meat broker last year had been USDA inspected and passed. FSQS controlled the illegal beef--about 8,500 pounds--until it was destroyed by the owner.

Other FSQS News

USDA approves enzyme-treated binders and extenders. Press Release #397-80 (2-19-80).

Public comments support uniform chicken inspection rates. Press Release #396-80 (2-19-80).

FSQS proposes freedom of information request procedures. The comment period ended April 22. Press Release #426-80 (2-22-80).

USDA proposal would change meat and poultry label approval procedures. The comment period ended April 28. Press Release #442-80 (2-26-80).

USDA to participate in pilot test of electronic meat marketing system. Press Release #578-80 (3-17-80).

USDA proposes changes in grade standards for canned fruits. The comment period ended Dec. 12. Press Release #614-80 (3-21-80).

USDA requires graders to wear white frocks. Press Release #632-80 (3-25-80).

USDA proposes reducing meat production reporting. Press Release #631-80 (3-25-80).

USDA to survey 1980 peach crop for internal disorders. Press Release #667-80 (3-28-80).

USDA amends egg products inspection regulations. Press Release #753-80 (4-9-80).

USDA seeks bids to buy \$30-million-worth of potato products. Press Release #782-80 (4-11-80).

What's New from FSQS



survey on boxed beef

See box on page 2 to order any of the following new materials from FSQS.

"How to Fight the Food Spoilers," the newest FSQS food safety publication, tells consumers what they can do in their own kitchens to prevent food poisoning. It gives tips for selecting, storing, and preparing food safely. The colorful mini-poster (6 by 8 inches) is available in Spanish as well as English. For mass distribution, groups should order either black and white reproductions or color negatives. Ask for PA-1255 (English) or PA-1255-S (Spanish).

food grading

A recent USDA survey determined that there is no need for additional regulation of distributors or end users of boxed beef. Ask for "National Survey of Boxed Beef."

A backgrounder defines the current food grading system, explains how it was developed, and outlines a recent USDA survey conducted to determine whether change is needed in the system. Ask for "Background On: The USDA Food Grades" (March 1980).

Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Service

USDA's Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Service:

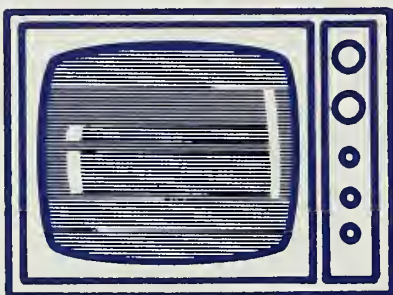
- Gathers and provides information on the agricultural economy;
- Analyzes international activities of agricultural significance;
- Does research on commodities, food and nutrition, cooperatives, natural resources, and rural development; and
- Furnishes timely and objective economic and statistical information to farmers and their cooperatives, other rural Americans, industries, consumers, and policy-makers.

Farmers: This Year's Good Guys in Food Prices

Blame marketing costs for most of the higher food prices in grocery stores this year. Labor costs, accounting for nearly half of total marketing costs (and taking a bigger slice of your food bill than farmers do), will rise about 10 percent. Packaging materials will also cost a tenth more than last year. Food transportation costs may inflate 11 to 13 percent. Food retailers and manufacturers will pay more for lighting, heating, cooling, and processing, contributing to a slight decline in food industry profits.

In contrast, only a 3 percent rise is seen for the value of farm products as a component in retail food prices, and net earnings in farming are tumbling. The cutoff in agricultural shipments to the Russians didn't help any, but stepped-up government aid to farmers will keep them from going deeper in the red and, say the experts, the suspension will have no impact on the U.S. consumer's food costs.

Nutri TV?



The best way to your stomach, food ads seem to indicate, is through the TV. First, the food industry puts more money into national media advertising than any other industry does, over twice as much as the runnerup, car and gasoline advertising. And second, 90 percent of that food ad dollar goes in TV. Highly processed foods account for much of total media advertising; and fast food chains advertise intensively, far beyond their relative importance in actual food spending.

Although less than a dollar out of every hundred in your food bill goes to finance media advertising beyond newspapers, most of the ads are image-creating rather than informative on price or product differences.

Altered Appetite Alone

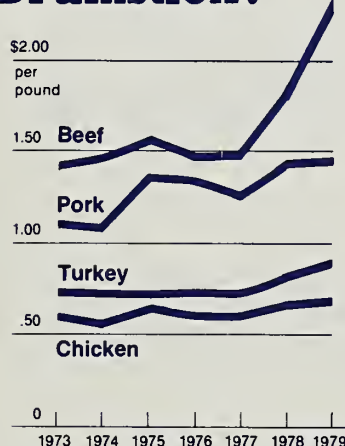
It's not surprising that people living alone spend differently on food than those in larger households. But it's important since they account for 12 percent of all food expenditures and figure to become a larger share of total households than the current one-in-five. As an admittedly very diverse group, they average spending less per person on cereals and more on bakery products. People living alone bring home much less beef and veal, probably because they eat out more. But they spend more for processed dairy products, fresh and processed fruits, and nonalcoholic drinks than persons buying for larger households.

Chef's Surprise

Getting what the diners paid for turned out to be the exception rather than the rule in a recent survey of restaurant menus in the nation's capital. In menus surveyed, all the advertised "fresh" shrimp had really been frozen, and most of the "fresh" fruit salads and cocktails contained fruit sections that had been commercially packed with preservatives. Most of the restaurants featuring "Prime" steaks and roasts couldn't prove it. And it was common to find that a menu's "Colorado" rainbow trout came from Japan and the "African" lobster tail from Florida.

So officials of the District of Columbia Environmental Health Administration began routine checks for menu accuracy, with reprimands for violations. Half the restaurants originally surveyed (where 85 percent showed menu violations) were re-surveyed. Nearly half of them were still derelict.

Nothing Beats a Thick, Juicy . . . Drumstick?



Changes in what we eat may be hardly discernible from one year to the next, but they begin showing up clearly over a decade. And they dispel notions that collectively we're slaves either of habit or to traditional food suppliers. Just consider the big changes occurring in the meats we eat. For example, between 1968 and 1978 red meat consumption per person rose barely 0.3 percent. Beef eating went up 9 percent, but pork, veal, lamb, and mutton lost ground. Meanwhile, our appetites soared for chicken and fish. Poultry eating rose 28 percent, and fish rose over 17 percent. In the preceding decade, pork eating had risen a tenth; fish eating very little.

Why the changes? For one thing, relative prices among meats have changed. Chicken costs less than half as much per pound as pork and beef, whose prices have risen much more. Health concerns may play a role, too, since chicken and fish generally have less cholesterol and saturated fat. Also, look at what's happened to restaurants and fast-food outlets. From 1972 to 1978, those selling mainly chicken rose 56 percent in number; seafood outlets multiplied by six, and now account for 60 percent of total fish eating.

Want More?

More details on these and other items of consumer interest are in the current issue of National Food Review, a quarterly. To subscribe, send a check for \$5.50 (domestic) or \$6.90 (foreign) to Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

For a free sample copy, write ESCS Publications, Rm. 0054-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Food and Nutrition Service

More Nutritious Foods in Schools

Foods sold in competition with federally subsidized meal programs in the nation's schools must meet an established nutritional standard by no later than July 1 under a new USDA rule. Many schools are already phasing out the sale of foods having minimal nutritional value.

The rule restricts the sale of soda pop, water ices, chewing gum, and some candies from the beginning of the school day until after the last lunch period. USDA officials hope it will encourage children to eat other kinds of snacks, such as fruits, juices, and nuts.

The rule will limit--until after the last lunch period--the sale of any food that has minimal nutritional value. Under the rule, a food is considered to have minimal nutritional value when it does not provide 5% or more of the U.S.

More Nutritious Food
continued

Recommended Dietary Allowance for any of the eight basic nutrients--protein, vitamins A and C, niacin, riboflavin, thiamin, calcium, and iron. These are the same eight nutrients listed on food labels.

More Meals for Children



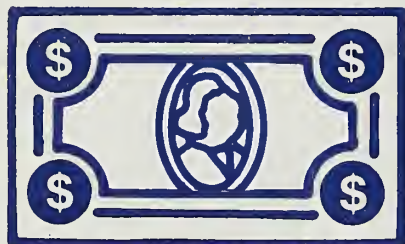
More children will be able to get meals through day care centers and homes as a result of new rules now in effect.

Under the new rules, people who provide child care in private homes can be reimbursed by the federal government for more of the costs involved in feeding the children. Sponsoring organizations (such as local government agencies or churches) will receive additional money for their administrative costs, based on the number of day-care homes the organizations administer. Also, sponsoring organizations will now be able to get "start-up money" to expand the program.

The new rules also make it easier for day care centers and homes to join the child care food program by taking a more flexible view of the state licensing requirement. States must notify annually all licensed or registered day-care centers and homes about the availability of federal funds.

The rules are intended to make more meals and better nutrition available to children from low-income families. More day care facilities will be able to join the program, and day care providers already in the program will have more money for food.

Cash Instead of Food Stamps



Beginning in April, eligible elderly and disabled people in Utah and South Carolina were able to get cash instead of food stamps under a one-year pilot project. Pilot programs in five other states will be phased in over the next few months.

The following areas were selected to take part in the demonstration project: Monroe County, N.Y.; Dillon, Darlington, Marion, and Florence counties, S.C.; Cuyahoga County, Ohio; Hennepin County, Minn.; the Portland area (regions 1 and 2) of Oregon; the state of Vermont; and the state of Utah.

In these areas, food stamp households--where every member is at least 65 years old or is participating in the supplemental security income program--will get a check each month for the amount of their food stamp allotment. (Supplemental security income is a cash assistance program through which the Social Security Administration provides benefits for aged, blind, and disabled people.)

Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Carol Tucker Foreman said, "We hope to find out whether providing cash instead of food stamps will encourage elderly and handicapped people to take part in the program. We will also look at the effect on food purchases of providing cash rather than food stamps."

Food Stamps for Elderly and Disabled

A new food stamp rule, now in effect, makes certain elderly and disabled food stamp users eligible for increased benefits.

Under the rule, elderly and disabled food stamp recipients are eligible to deduct high medical expenses or exceptionally high shelter costs from their gross incomes. These deductions will have the effect of raising their food stamp benefits.

The new rule allows elderly and disabled persons to deduct medical expenses exceeding \$35 a month and shelter costs exceeding 50 percent of adjusted income. The new rule applies only to the elderly and disabled--not to other food stamp users.

Food Forecast for May



USDA distributes Food Marketing Alert to people who communicate with consumers, but the agency does not distribute to individual consumers. For a sample copy and order blank write to Information Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, Rm. 3620-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Food News for Consumers

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